

"Mapping the Internet Terrain": some research notes on the multi-stakeholder approach to Internet governance

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“Mapping the Internet Terrain”

Some research notes on the multi-stakeholder approach to Internet governance

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Introduction

The rise of the Internet has had a marked effect on how we view political power.¹ Around the turn of the millennium, the nation-state as a political factor seemed to be in retreat, and was described as being “under siege”.² Giving individuals instant and affordable access to vast amounts of information,

¹ Political power is perhaps best described as “the ability to affect others to obtain preferred outcomes.” See Nye, Joseph S. 2011. *The Future of Power*. New York: Public Affairs. 90.

² For a discussion on the globalization’s effect on state sovereignty see, for instance, Cameron, David R. et al., eds. 2006. *Globalization and Self-Determination. Is the nation-state under siege?* New York: Routledge.

the Internet “has collapsed the world, transcending and blurring political boundaries.”³ As everyday lives have been perceived as being significantly transformed by the Internet, so, too, were traditional concepts of territoriality and state sovereignty. It was even claimed that “[t]he new technologies encourage noninstitutional, shifting networks over the fixed bureaucratic hierarchies that are the hallmark of the single-voiced sovereign state.”⁴

However, while there is no doubt “that significant deterritorialisation has taken place in human affairs, territory remains a crucial factor for many key aspects of humankind’s social, economic and especially political structures.”⁵ In our near future, the pre-eminence of the state will thus very likely continue to outrange that of non-state actors, but states today will find it much more difficult to maintain their accustomed degree of control. The information revolution has, in fact, triggered a considerable diffusion of power among a broad variety of different state and non-state actors. In such an environment, “[p]olitical leaders will enjoy fewer degrees of freedom before they must respond to events, and then they will have to share the stage with more actors.”⁶

The present paper looks at one of the most relevant fields reflecting the ongoing power shifts between state and non-state actors. This field – really a collection of different processes or regimes – is most commonly referred to as “Internet governance”. Essentially, Internet governance deals with the management of the global resources that effectively make up the Internet. Perhaps one of the most significant features of this field is the multi-stakeholder concept, which has been instrumental in bestowing legitimacy on a number of different actors and institutional arrangements that are key to the functioning of the global Internet.

While the multi-stakeholder concept is generally defined as the participation of representatives from governments, the private sector and civil society, there is no single overriding definition of the term itself. The implied use of the term is “equal participation” of the actors in managing the global Internet resources, however this principle of equal participation has increasingly been called into question – mostly by governments.⁷ This, in effect, also calls into question the legitimacy of existing Internet governance institutions – first and foremost the mandate of the non-profit Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) which, among other tasks, is responsible for the Domain Name System. If Internet governance is thus construed of as a “battlefield” in the wider context of cyber diplomacy,⁸ then the very definition of the multi-stakeholder concept can be seen as akin to a dominant terrain feature. And that terrain is changing.

To put these present changes within a historic context, and provide an example for future, more in-depth research, this paper looks at a decisive moment in the history of Internet governance: a series

³ Kahin, Brian and Charles Nesson, eds. 1997. *Borders in cyberspace: information policy and the global information infrastructure*. Cambridge: MIT Press. 7.

⁴ Where “emperors, kings, dukes, knights, popes, archbishops, guilds, and cities exercised overlapping secular power over the same territory in a system that looks much more like a modern, three-dimensional network than the clean-lined, hierarchical state order that replaced it” (Mathews, Jessica T. 1997. “Power Shift.” *Foreign Affairs* 7, no. 1 (January/February): 50-66, 61).

⁵ Buzan, Barry. 2004. *From International to World Society. English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalisation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 92.

⁶ Nye, Joseph S. 2011. *The Future of Power*. New York: Public Affairs. 116.

⁷ See, for instance, Klimburg, Alexander. 2013. “Internet Yalta.” *Commentary at the Center for a New American Security*, 5 February: 1-7.

⁸ Klimburg, Alexander and Philipp Mirtl. 2012. “Cyberspace and Governance – A Primer.” *oiiip Working Paper* 65 (September): 18-9.

of United Nations meetings between 2003 and 2005, where the multi-stakeholder concept emerged as a new phraseology in international cooperation.⁹ More specifically, this paper looks at how the linguistic patterns of a defining international meeting – the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) – have reflected the power relationships within the field of Internet governance from the outset. While analyzing the impact of the associated Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG) on the preparatory processes which eventually led to the final documents of the WSIS, this paper will attempt to shed some light on the power relations between state and non-state actors regarding their different “statuses” within the field of Internet governance.

The Internet & Internet governance

The Internet is the unique “global network of computer networks”¹⁰ – the one and only network of networks, which connects all Internet users on a planetary (or even “intergalactic”¹¹) scale. It has been defined as:

“the global data communication capability realized by the interconnection of public and private telecommunication networks using Internet Protocol (IP), Transmission Control Protocol (TCP), and the other protocols required to implement IP internetworking on a global scale, such as DNS and packet routing protocols.”¹²

Since its origins in the 1970s, the Internet has largely grown through bottom-up processes within the technical and academic community. For this reason, few individuals – and even fewer institutions – can realistically claim to be the “father” of the Internet as we know it today. Above all else, the Internet is a community construct, where key issues are settled within ad-hoc groups of engineers whose only qualifications for making these decisions are their technical capabilities and the fact that they are volunteering their time. Groups such as the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF), which has played a dominant role in fixing many of the protocols used across the Internet, are so famously abhorrent of lengthy decision making procedures that instead of voting on new code, they go by the ‘hum’. If the ‘hum’ is considered loud enough, the proposal is considered adopted by acclamation. The apolitical and essentially utopian subculture that – to this day – is the generator of the Internet found its voice in the “A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace”: “Governments of the Industrial World, you weary giants of flesh and steel, I come from Cyberspace, the new home of Mind. On behalf of the future, I ask you of the past to leave us alone. You are not welcome among us.

⁹ Kummer, Markus. 2013. “Multistakeholder Cooperation: Reflections on the emergence of a new phraseology in international cooperation.” ISOC Public Policy Blog (May).

<http://www.internetsociety.org/blog/2013/05/multistakeholder-cooperation-reflections-emergence-new-phraseology-international>.

¹⁰ Naughton, John. 1999. *A brief History of the Future. The Origins of the Internet*. London: Phoenix. 314.

¹¹ See Licklider, J.C.R., “Members and Affiliates of the Intergalactic Computer Network, Advanced Research Projects Agency.” *Memorandum*. 23 April 1963, <http://www.chick.net/wizards/memo.html>.

¹² Mueller, Milton et al. 2007. “The Internet and Global Governance: Principles and Norms for a New Regime.” *Global Governance* 13, no. 2. 244. For more definitions of the “Internet” see, for instance, Lindsay, David. 2007. *International domain name law: ICANN and the UDRP*. Oxford: Hart Publishing. 1; IETF, “FYI on Questions and Answers. Answers to Commonly asked ‘New Internet User’ Questions (RFC 1206).” 1991, <http://tools.ietf.org/html/rfc1206>; FNC, “FNC Resolution: Definition of ‘Internet.’” 24 October 1995, http://nitrd.gov/fnc/Internet_res.html.

You have no sovereignty where we gather.”¹³

For a while, those “giants of flesh and steel” were happy to ignore the Internet, a phenomenon whose growth has still not adequately been described but is probably unique in human history. While the term “Internet governance” was coined only around the beginning of the new millennium, the debate on related issues dates back to at least the early 1990s, when the Harvard Information Infrastructure Project (HIIP)¹⁴ brought together experts from government, industry, and academia to elaborate on emerging policy issues related to the development, use and growth of the global information infrastructure – most notably the Internet. However, a broader debate on Internet governance was only triggered after the United Nations’ 2003 World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS-I) in Geneva, setting up a collaborative Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG) to “investigate and make proposals for action, as appropriate, on the governance of [the] Internet by 2005.”¹⁵

After four meetings and with full and active participation of multiple stakeholders, including governments (44%), the private sector (28%) and non-governmental actors (28%) from both developing (59%) and developed countries (41%)¹⁶ – the WGIG delivered a report¹⁷ (and an accompanying background report¹⁸) which served as input for the 2005 WSIS in Tunis (WSIS-II).¹⁹ The main recommendation of the WGIG was the creation of a forum which “could address (...) issues, that are cross-cutting and multidimensional and that either affect more than one institution, are not dealt with by any institution, or are not addressed in a coordinated manner.”²⁰ This fundamentally inspired WSIS-II and led to the creation of the UN-backed, but multi-stakeholder-oriented Internet Governance Forum (IGF), which should “identify emerging issues, bring them to the attention of the relevant bodies and the general public, and, where appropriate, make recommendations.”²¹

The WGIG also provided a working definition of Internet governance which was eventually adopted by WSIS-II. By reflecting the multi-stakeholder nature behind WGIG and the IGF, the WGIG defined Internet Governance as “the development and application by governments, the private sector and civil society, in their respective roles, of shared principles, norms, rules, decision-making procedures, and programs that shape the evolution and use of the Internet.”²² However, while WSIS-II provided an explicit definition of Internet governance, it did not provide an explicit definition of the multi-stakeholder approach.

¹³ See John Perry Barlow “A Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace” (1996), available at <https://projects.eff.org/~barlow/Declaration-Final.html>

¹⁴ See http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/project/9/harvard_information_infrastructure_project.html.

¹⁵ World Summit on the Information Society. 2003. “Geneva Declaration of Principles (WSIS-03/GENEVA/DOC/0004).” Para. 50.

¹⁶ See Mathiason, John. 2009. “Internet Governance. The new frontier of global institutions.” New York: Routledge. 118.

¹⁷ Working Group on Internet Governance. 2005a. “Report from the Working Group on Internet Governance (WSIS-II/PC-3/DOC/05).” 3.

¹⁸ Working Group on Internet Governance. 2005b. “Background Report. The Working Group on Internet Governance.” <http://www.wgig.org/docs/BackgroundReport.doc>.

¹⁹ See: <http://www.itu.int/wsisis/tunis/index.html>.

²⁰ Working Group on Internet Governance. 2005a. “Report from the Working Group on Internet Governance (WSIS-II/PC-3/DOC/05).” 10f.

²¹ World Summit on the Information Society. 2005. “Tunis Agenda for the Information Society (WSIS-05/TUNIS/DOC/6(Rev. 1)-E).” Para. 72-82.

²² Ibid: Para. 34.

The multi-stakeholder approach in Internet governance

The multi-stakeholder approach was already deeply rooted in the overall political transformations that were increasingly apparent during the 1980s and 1990s, when governments started to realize that they were incapable of unilaterally coping with challenges posed by increasingly scrutinized state legitimacy, the primacy of free markets, environmental degradation and rapid globalization. In order to better deal with these issues (and in a cultural environment marked by neoliberal thought), governments reached out to partners within the private sector and civil society, shedding assets and functions not deemed any more a matter for direct government control. At the international level, the United Nations used this development to fundamentally rethink governance in all its forms. From its inception the UN was not exclusively governmental: there were already tested methods in collaborating with non-state actors.²³ However, it was not before the 1992 Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro that a UN program on sustainable development put so much emphasis on the importance of “major groups” other than government. This included women, children and youth, indigenous people, NGOs, local authorities, workers and trade unions, business and industry, the scientific and technological community and farmers – and these groups were invited to participate directly in the negotiations themselves.²⁴

Rio triggered a wave of initiatives that experimented with partnerships between members of the major groups, and which in 2004 climaxed in the Cardoso Report. Building upon previous experiences, in its first proposal the Report suggested that in “exercising its convening power, the United Nations should emphasize the inclusion of all constituencies relevant to the issue, recognize that the key actors are different for different issues and foster multi-stakeholder partnerships to pioneer solutions and empower a range of global policy networks to innovate and build momentum on policy options.”²⁵ This document put a label to the process initiated in Rio, and therefore made it accessible to other fields of endeavor within the UN.

While the multi-stakeholder approach has been described as a new variant of multilateral cooperation,²⁶ others view the process to be completely novel and not comparable with any conventional concept of (by definition) state-centered multilateralism. There is still no explicit and universally acknowledged definition of what the “multi-stakeholder approach” means. Part of this resulting confusion over how to conceptually deal with the term is in part due to its connection to the contested “stakeholder” concept, which has been used in a plethora of different settings, and with hundreds of different definitions suggested.²⁷ More recently, however, four analytical categories of multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSIs) have been proposed to help better evaluate “their ability to increase

²³ Especially as regards the role of the Economic and Social Council in context of Article 71 within the organisation’s Charta.

²⁴ United Nations. 1992. “Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Annex II., Agenda 21 (A/CONF.151/26 (Vol. II).”

²⁵ United Nations. 2004. “Strengthening of the United Nations system (A/58/817).” 16.

²⁶ Martens, Jens. 2007. “Multistakeholder Partnerships – Future Models of Multilateralism?” *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Occasional Paper* 29 (January): 4 <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/04244.pdf>.

²⁷ Miles, Samantha. 2012. “Stakeholder: Essentially Contested or Just Confused?” *Journal for Business Ethics* 108, no. 3: 285-298.

a) the democratic accountability and b) the capacity of specific regulatory regimes shaped by MSIs”^{28,29}.

1. **Function:** MSIs can often be understood in addition to existing intergovernmental or private governance bodies. In this regard, one can differentiate between various functions, including dialogue/forum, institution building, rule setting, rule implementation or rule monitoring.
2. **Driver and motives:** Another category accounts for questions regarding the driver behind a specific MSI, such as a certain government or company. Besides posing the question of leadership, one also needs to include an examination of the stakeholders’ motives (e.g., as an opportunity to develop best practices or as an alternative to regulation on the one hand and laissez-faire on the other one).
3. **Status:** MSIs have been characterized by an important paradox. While, in principle, all stakeholders are considered equal partners, in practice, these partners can take quite different formal and informal roles. Even if governments have not been granted a superior status over civil society, “the asymmetric resources and operating modes of the stakeholders can lead to confrontations and the reversion into former patterns of adverse and un-cooperating behavior.”³⁰ Viewed from a different perspective, however, this “cocktail of diverse interests and profiles” (described as “group diversity”) might, in the end, turn out to be a considerable strength of MSIs.³¹
4. **Areas of intervention:** While there are many potential areas for MSIs to be established, those areas with a high level of contestation (e.g., implementation of human rights in weak governance zones) or regulatory complexity (e.g., global environmental regimes) are seen as particularly amenable to MSIs.

While each of these categories poses equally important questions, in the context of Internet governance the focus on “status” seems to be particularly interesting. The creation of the Internet was not the result of traditional interstate multilateralism, but of a bottom-up process involving a broad variety of different stakeholders – especially actors from both the private sector as well as civil society. This is not only reflected in the culture of core Internet organizations (such as, for instance, the IETF mentioned previously), but also in the fact that most of the supporting Internet infrastructure remains under the control and responsibility of the private sector. Governments, overall, simply did not play much of a role in the development and maintenance of the Internet. Indeed, among states only the US government can be said to have had any influence on the development of the Internet at all, and the exact extent of that influence is debated.³² What is usually not debated is that the US government has surrendered much (although not all) of those “founder rights” – while, simultaneously, other governments and governmental organisations are pushing for a larger say on how the Internet is governed.

²⁸ Koechlin, Lucy, and Richard Calland. 2009. “Standard setting at the cutting edge: an evidence-based typology for multi-stakeholder initiatives.” In: Anne Peters et al. eds. *Non-State Actors as Standard Setters*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 84-112. 90.

²⁹ Ibid: 90-4.

³⁰ Ibid: 93.

³¹ Ibid: 93.

³² For instance, a common overstatement is the claim that the US military developed the Internet, or that the Internet was intended to survive a nuclear war. These misconceptions are based on the fact that much of the original academic research (which occurred within civilian institutions) was funded, in part, by grants provided by the US Department of Defence. This was, however, by no means a rare occurrence in the scientific establishment of the Cold War.

The increasing influence of states within the broader field of Internet governance has triggered substantial debate over the status of non-state actors. Although this debate is not new, it has been increasingly waged with direct references to the final documents of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). This debate has often led to considerable controversy. However, as long as this debate is kept alive (e.g., within the Internet Governance Forum), constructive dialogue among all relevant stakeholders can contribute to a better understanding of their actual role and status in the development and maintenance of the Internet. From an academic perspective, this ongoing debate about the status of stakeholders in Internet governance offers a wealth of information that is waiting to be analyzed by those interested in the underlying power shifts between the actors involved. In fact, this debate offers a fruitful case study in power diffusion – and the reaction to it.

The present paper suggests a linguistic approach which is primarily focused on the language used in the documents that were prepared in the context of the World Summit on the Information Society. Detailed analysis of these documents allows us to take a look at the origins of linguistic phenomena that are re-occurring in the ongoing debate on the status of stakeholders in Internet governance. Due to constraints of space and resources, only a first glance will be provided here. It is however hoped that this paper can function as a useful basis for future research, research which could tackle a much broader collection of documents in order to enable a more comprehensive analysis of the underlying power relations between different stakeholders within the broader field of Internet governance.

Language as reality³³

Language is reality. The systematic, scientific study that embarks upon defining this reality – either as an idealized formal language system out of context, or as the study of concrete utterances in the “real life” use of languages as a social phenomenon – is called linguistics. One of the branches of linguistics, namely corpus linguistics, was plainly defined as “the study of language based on examples of ‘real life’ language use.”³⁴ Corpus linguistics employs a collection of natural texts, recognized as corpus, in diverse linguistic studies. McEnery and Wilson defined a corpus as a body of text assembled “to be maximally representative of the language or language variety.”³⁵

The assembling of the data which are most appropriate for the research question(s) (e.g., the gathering of the corpus) is one of the most substantial facets of corpus linguistics.³⁶ The data creating the corpus “reflect the way in which language is actually used.”³⁷ McEnery and Hardie differentiated between two types of corpora, including monitor corpora (also known as general corpora³⁸), which constantly enlarges so as to accommodate more and more data deriving from various texts, and bal-

³³ N.B. This section has been, in part, used in a forthcoming PhD thesis by Gjorgieva, Snezana. *Forthcoming. Quantitative Analysis on Mass Communication of International Organisations*. PhD Thesis at the University of Vienna.

³⁴ McEnery, Tony, and Andrew Wilson. 2001. *Corpus Linguistics*. Edinburgh: University Press.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ McEnery, Tony, and Andrew Hardey. 2012. *Corpus Linguistics: Method, Theory and Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

³⁷ Aarts, Jan. 2002. „Does corpus linguistics exist? Some old and new issues.“ In: Leiv Egil Breivik, and Angela Hasselgren, eds. *From the COLT's mouth... and others': Language corpora studies in honour of Anna-Brita Stenström*. Amsterdam: Rodopi. 1-16.

³⁸ Baker, Paul, and Tony McEnery. 2005. „A corpus-based approach to discourses of refugees and asylum seekers in UN and newspaper texts.“ *Language and Politics* 4, no. 2. 197–226.

anced corpora (also known as sample corpora), representative of a particular type of language within a specific time framework.³⁹

Method⁴⁰

Word Smith 5.0, computer software designed to look at “how words behave in texts”,⁴¹ has been used for the purpose of the small-scale analysis. The in-depth analysis of the texts is conducted through the offered programs of WordSmith (e.g., WordList, KeyWords and Concord).

A word list provides a list of all of the separate words or word-clusters in a text, indicating the number of times each of them occurs. Upon the generation of a smaller, specialized corpus word list, the frequency of each word of the text is being compared to the frequency of the words in a reference corpus word list. The words which are distinguished in their frequency are being acknowledged as “key”. In corpus linguistics methodology, “keyness” refers to the statistically higher/lower frequencies of particular words in one corpus (called “keywords”) when compared to their frequency in another corpus.⁴² Scott defined Concord – the third tool offered by the WordSmith – as a possibility “to see any word or phrase in context.”⁴³ Once inspecting a given word in its environment, one can acquire a better understanding of its use. The adjoining words of a particular word subjected to examination in the text(s) are collocates.

Example of a small-scale analysis

The following illustration intends to provide an example of the application of corpus linguistics methodologies. This small-scale analysis has been conducted on a specialized corpus and its sub-corpora respectively, and has been divided into two parts. The first part commences with an examination of the word list, key words, their concordances and collocations, thus providing a comprehensive impression of the multi-stakeholder concept (e.g., Internet governance related language overall). The second part of the analysis examines the chronological development and variation of some of the key terminology, the environment of its occurrences, the alteration or endurance of some of its applications, as well as depicts on the context of the manifestations of specific definitions and explanations.

The first sub-corpus (referred to as Pre-WGIG corpus) lists a total of 11,788 tokens (running words) and encompasses two documents: the “WSIS Plan of Action”, and the “WSIS Declaration of Principles”, which were both published in December 2003. The second sub-corpus (referred to as WGIG corpus), consists of 7,399 tokens and contains the “Report of the Working Group on Internet Governance”, which was published in June 2005. The final sub-corpus that was generated for this analysis (referred to as Post-WGIG corpus) lists a total of 12,108 tokens and includes two documents: the

³⁹ McEnery, Tony, and Andrew Hardey. 2012. *Corpus Linguistics: Method, Theory and Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁴⁰ N.B. abridged from Gjorgieva (Forthcoming).

⁴¹ Scott, Mike. 2007-2013. *Oxford WordSmith Tools. Version 5.0*. Oxford et al.: Oxford University Press.

⁴² Mike Scott in: Gabrielatos, Costas, and Paul Baker. 2008. “Fleeing, sneaking, flooding: A corpus analysis of discursive constructions of refugees and asylum seekers in the UK Press 1996-2005.” *Journal of English Linguistics* 36, no. 1: 5-38.

⁴³ Scott, Mike. 2004-2017. “Oxford WordSmith Tools. Version 4.0.” Oxford et al.: Oxford University Press. 2.

“WSIS Tunis Agenda for the Information Society”, and the “WSIS Tunis Commitment”, which were both published in November 2005.

The entire corpus through the years 2003-2005 makes up a total of five documents and 31,295 tokens. It is important to stress here that the analysis of a more comprehensive corpus could potentially lead to quite different results.

Table 1: Names of corpora, years of publication, number of documents and tokens

Name	Year	Documents Used (N)	Tokens (Running Words)
Pre-WGIG corpus	2003	2	11,788
WGIG corpus	2005a	1	7,399
Post-WGIG corpus	2005b	2	12,108
<i>Entire corpus</i>	<i>2003-2005</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>31,295</i>

Eliminating “noise” words, the top 10 (out of 500) keywords of the Entire corpus are listed in the legend of Figure 1 (ranked according to their occurrence within the text). While most of these keywords follow a quite similar trend (namely, diminishing textual prominence from Pre-WGIG to WGIG, and rising textual prominence from WGIG to Post-WGIG), the two terms “internet” and “governance” follow a different pattern. This, however, is not surprising as the main aim of the WGIG was to “investigate and make proposals for action, as appropriate, on the governance of [the] Internet.”⁴⁴ A glance at the collocation of the term “governance” correspondingly reveals that it was most often used in combination with the term “internet”, i.e. when referring to “internet governance”.

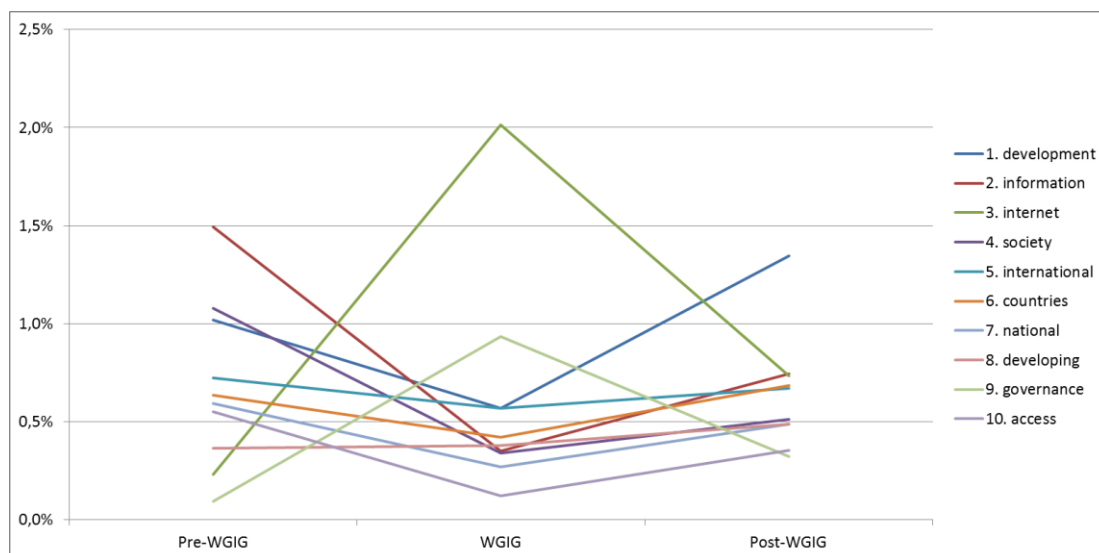


Figure 1: Top 10 keywords of entire corpus (2003-2005) plotted as sub-corpus occurrences (in % of sub-corpus total of tokens)

⁴⁴ World Summit on the Information Society. 2003. “Geneva Declaration of Principles (WSIS-03/GENEVA/DOC/0004).” Para. 50.

Among the results for the terms “internet” and “governance”, some of the top 150 keywords describe a quite similar pattern in the textual prominence across sub-corpora. This, for instance, includes terms such as “stakeholder/s”, “multi-stakeholder” or “equal”. However, the textual prominence of “stakeholder/s” and “multi-stakeholder” has increased between 2003 and 2005 (see Figure 2).

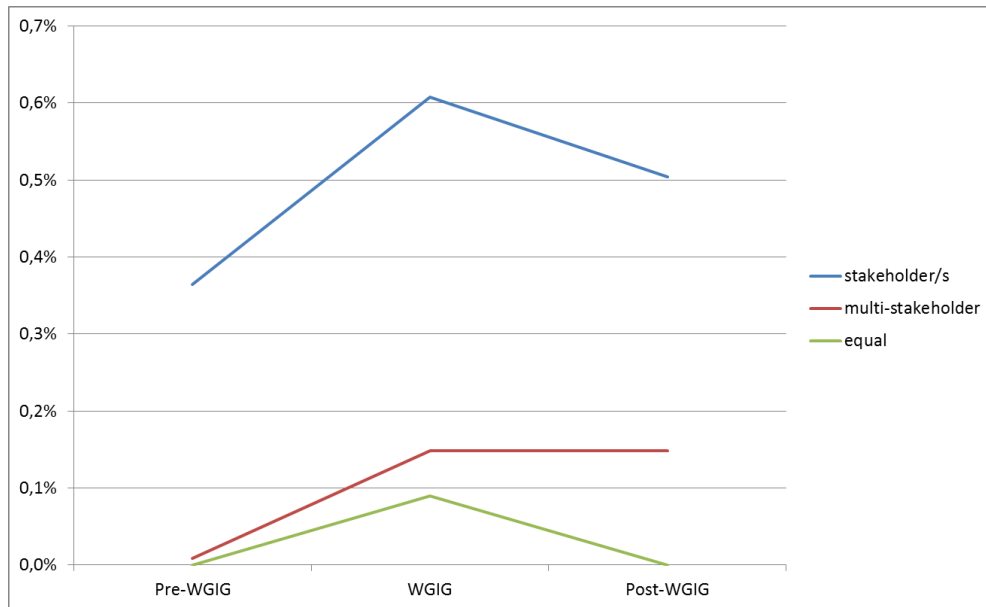


Figure 2: Selection of top 150 keywords of entire corpus (2003-2005) plotted as sub-corpus occurrences (in % of sub-corpus total of tokens)

When complementing the analysis of the term “equal” by looking at its collocation, one finds that, while in the Pre-WGIG corpus the term was used in reference to gender equality and equal opportunities, in the WGIG corpus it was used in combination with the term “footing” (“equal footing”), referring to all Internet governance stakeholders such as governments, the private sector and civil society. In the Post-WGIG corpus, however, “equal footing” was exclusively used in reference to governments, without any mention of civil society or the private sector (e.g., “governments on an equal footing”).

In this context, it might also be interesting to move away from an analysis of top keywords towards an analysis of those words which are not at all listed among the top 500. It is, for instance, striking that the expression “enhanced cooperation” has only been introduced in the Post-WGIG corpus.

These preliminary results imply that, in the WGIG corpus, the emphasis was on providing governments a say equal to that of the private sector and civil society. This substantially changed in the post-WGIG corpus, where “equal footing” seems to apply only to governments (e.g., the need to establish equal representations among all governments vis-à-vis each other). Taking into account the occurrence of the term “enhanced cooperation” in the Post-WGIG corpus, this could indicate a shift in narrative away from fighting for the rights of states within the multi-stakeholder concept, towards a more state-focused discussion simply on which of the states needed to be better represented – the struggle for some states to demand a greater say, rather than conceptual problems with the idea of sharing control and responsibility with non-state actors.

Discussion of results

The aim of this small-scale analysis was to provide a very basic idea of how linguistic corpus analysis could be played out in the study of Internet governance. After looking back in history, we can now continue our analysis and additionally support it with already existing information published in the aftermath of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). However, while the scope of the present paper is very limited, this analysis can only contribute a scattered landscape of relevant Internet governance issues that might eventually be taken up and expanded in future research devoted to shed further light on the ongoing power shifts between state and non-state actors.

Regarding the increasing textual prominence of terms such as “stakeholder/s” and “multi-stakeholder”, between 2003 and 2005 it can be claimed that this trend seems to have continued. The multi-stakeholder approach has gained some currency as a broadly agreed-upon principle. On the policy level, this has been confirmed in international documents such as the Council of Europe Declaration on Internet Governance, the OECD Communiqué on Internet Policy Making, or the eG8 Deauville Declaration. Additionally, the resulting “Internet Principles Hype”⁴⁵ was accompanied by an increased academic interest in the term “multi-stakeholder” (see Figure 3).



Figure 3: Occurrence of the combination "internet governance" AND "multi-stakeholder" OR "multistakeholder" OR "multi stakeholder" OR "multistakeholderism" OR "multi-stakeholderism" (in % of total results for "internet governance")

While there seems to be broad agreement on the overall importance of the multi-stakeholder approach, the status of the affected stakeholders is anything but clear. Increasingly, however, there is a strong tendency away from the assumption that all stakeholders possess an equal standing. For instance, in December 2013 the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) agreed upon an initial set of confidence-building measures (CBMs) to reduce the risks of conflict stemming from the use of information and communication technologies – also referred to as the first set of cyber security-related CBMs. Importantly, in an interpretative statement attached to the CBMs, the Russian Federation makes clear that it “will be guided in its implementation by a firm commitment to

⁴⁵ See, for instance, Kleinwächter, Wolfgang. 2011. “Internet Principles Hype: How Soft Law Is Used to Regulate the Internet.” *.nxt*, 25 July.

the principle of non-inference in the internal affairs of States, their equality in the process of Internet governance and the sovereign right of States to Internet governance in their national information space [emphasis added], to international law and to the observance of fundamental human rights and freedoms.”⁴⁶

Finally, the expression “enhanced cooperation” had only been introduced during the last phase of the World Summit on the Information Society. This choice was made to avoid a deadlock between those, on the one hand, who argued in favor of a new cooperation model with an intergovernmental Internet council on top, and those, on the other one, who were content with the existing Internet governance structure. In the end, the concept was aimed to suggest a third way to reconcile these two opposite positions: “The language came from the European Union, where, in various EU treaties, ‘enhanced cooperation’ is used to describe dynamic processes which go beyond the basic agreement among EU member states [such] as the Schengen-Treaty, where some EU members have removed travel restrictions among themselves.”⁴⁷ However, the definition remained vague and ambiguous, which is why in 2012, the UN General Assembly invited the Chair of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development to establish a working group on enhanced cooperation “to make recommendations on how to fully implement this mandate.”⁴⁸ More recently, it seems that there has been a trend towards combining the concept of multi-stakeholder initiatives with the term “enhanced cooperation”. In October 2013, for instance, the Montevideo Statement on the Future of Internet Cooperation – supported by the representatives of Internet organizations such as the IETF – has called for a “mechanisms for global multistakeholder Internet cooperation”⁴⁹ – without explicitly defining what such a mechanism would imply.

In conclusion, it is important to stress that the field of Internet governance provides a fertile ground for future research devoted to the power relations between state and non-state actors. The approach proposed here was based on linguistic corpus analysis, which might, for instance, be expanded by various forms of discourse analysis. In this way, it is hoped to contribute to the ongoing discussions about the continuing power shifts among state and non-state actors within the broader field of Internet governance.

Outlook: prospects for further research

The above example only provides a glimpse into the pool of possibilities that corpus linguistics methodologies offer in exploring multi-stakeholder initiatives in the broader field of Internet governance. The World Summit on the Information Society has triggered an increased interest in multi-stakeholder initiatives. This trend has intensified with the creation of a multi-stakeholder Internet Governance Forum (IGF), which today encompasses not only Western societies, but, inter alia, also the African Internet Governance Forum and similar organizations.

⁴⁶ Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. 2013. “Initial Set of OSCE Confidence-Building Measures to Reduce the Risks of Conflict Stemming from the Use of Information and Communication Technologies (PC.DEV/1106).” 4.

⁴⁷ Kleinwächter, Wolfgang. 2013. “Enhanced Cooperation in Internet Governance: From Mystery to Clarity?” *CircleID*, 20 November 2013.

⁴⁸ See: <http://unctad.org/en/Pages/CSTD/WGEC.aspx>

⁴⁹ ICANN et al. 2013. “Montevideo Statement on the Future of Internet Cooperation.” <http://www.icann.org/en/news/announcements/announcement-07oct13-en.htm>

Bearing in mind the above analysis, one expanded approach towards a better understanding of Internet governance could be to look at the development of the multi-stakeholder concept within a larger context. This could be done through an extensive step-by-step study of 1) existing definitions of the multistakeholder concept within different fora; 2) attempts to redefine the concept; 3) the concept's normative associations; and 4) influences seeking to shift the affiliations of the term itself. For such a comprehensive investigation, a chronological approach could be of great help.⁵⁰ By applying a proven quantitative linguistic methodology, the above mentioned power shifts could be detected more specifically, their differences and similarities could be depicted, the direction(s) they took over time (or within a specific time frame) could be explored, and this might eventually help distinguish the possible forces that steered such changes.

The above examinations could also be applied to the concept of “enhanced cooperation”, its contexts of occurrence, as well as its affiliations and associations to the multi-stakeholder concept. An additional study could involve an inquiry into, and comparison of, the activities taken over by region-specific parties, such as, for instance, the pursuits of the USA as compared to the ones of Europe or Africa in that matter.

The above analysis could be conducted not only on the basis of the documents produced and published by international bodies and organizations, but also on papers, records and reports produced by all relevant stakeholders including governments, the private sector and civil society. All of the above data could be analyzed *within* the framework of the corpora (under which they have been assembled) or *between* the corpora. They would thus offer a possibility of *intra* and *inter* corpus analysis. Furthermore, the analysis could open space for additional terminology directly or indirectly associated with the multi-stakeholder approach, arising within the course of investigation to be examined.

Instead of a conclusion

In the near future, the pre-eminence of the state will very likely continue to outrange the power of non-state actors, but state leaders will have to share the political stage with actors outside traditional interstate multilateralism. As the Internet was essentially developed in a bottom-up process, and also remains – in considerable parts – under the primary control and responsibility of both the private sector and civil society, the field of Internet governance offers a fruitful ground to study these ongoing shifts in power distribution.

The multi-stakeholder concept is located at the very heart of Internet governance and can be described as the participation of representatives from governments, the private sector and civil society. To explain what makes such effort more legitimate and effective, requires – first and foremost – a better understanding of their underlying processes. In studying the language of key Internet governance documents regarding the status of different actors within a multi-stakeholder setting, one might detect the ongoing power shifts among state and non-state actors. The present analysis – although strictly limited in both scope and depth – illustrated what may be a critical aspect: namely, that within the present corpus it is not the “equal participation” of the civil society, private sector

⁵⁰ A similar study approach has been applied in: Gjorgieva (Forthcoming).

and government which is implicitly being questioned. Rather, it may be the equal participation of governments within the state-actor category which was the true focus of the debate.

Further research with an expanded corpus may well uncover other important insights as to the nature of the Internet governance debate. This could not only help to better understand the “battle” for the Internet as it currently unfolds, but also some of the factors involved in one of the most significant transformations of political power in modern times.